

in it we are supposed to reconcile taxes and spending.

I believe that a budget bill should be a statement of our national values and how we spend our money is a statement of those values, and how we tax and who we tax is a statement of our sense of values in our country. I do not think that this reconciliation bill before the House meets any test that our constituents would have as a statement of values, a statement of national values, and a statement of a sense of fairness in our country. Indeed, in trying to achieve a balanced budget financially, we are indeed producing a lopsided budget way out of balance in terms of values and meeting the needs of our country.

Mr. Speaker, the other day I was at an event and they asked me what the three biggest challenges to America were. What are the three biggest issues? As a Member of Congress, they wanted to know what I would name as the three issues.

□ 2015

I said, that is easy. The three biggest issues in our country are our children, our children, and our children. The sad thing about this legislation before us, the Republican majority reconciliation bill, is the devastation that it wreaks on children.

Our colleagues are fond of saying on the other side of the aisle that this puts us on a glide path to a balanced budget. It puts us on a glide path to a crash.

Because unless we invest in our children, we will never have a balanced budget. Unless we invest in our children and our families, we will not be able to produce the productive people that we need to keep our country competitive. Instead, we will continue, as this bill calls for, a continuation of the Republican notion of trickle down.

But it is on the issue of children that I would like to speak this evening. Because, as I say, if it is a statement of values of what we stand for as a country, it should be a statement of how we care for our children.

I do not think any of our listeners or viewers would consider it a statement of their values to cut millions of children out of Medicaid, guaranteed health care, in order to give a tax break to the wealthiest people in America. At the same time, I do not think our constituents consider it a statement of their values for us to give a tax break that the overwhelming majority of it benefits the top 6 percent earners in our country, the wealthiest people in our country.

Do not take it from me, though. Listen to what a Republican has to say. My colleague from Florida already referenced Senator SPECTER's remarks when he said, "Much of the pain of the spending cuts goes to the elderly, the young and the infirm, while allowing tax cuts for corporate America."

Senator SPECTER then also went on to say, "I suggest to my Republican

colleagues that we all rethink support for a combination of tax cuts and spending cuts that may lead to the perception of the Republican Party as the party of wealth, power and privilege, and not the party of ordinary workers."

As you can see here, Jack Kemp also had his concerns about what is in this bill. Jack Kemp, a leading light in the Republican Party, said, "I hope you guys do not go too far on removing the earned income tax credit, because that is a tax increase on low-income workers and the poor, which is unconscionable at this time."

Of course, the earned income tax credit is cut back in this bill. That is a tax credit that is given to the working poor in our country. Some of us view it as a subsidy for an unfair low minimum wage in our country, and it benefits America's businesses as much as it benefits the families. But no matter what, it does benefit the families. But we have to cut that back—a tax credit for the working poor—in order to give a tax break to the wealthiest people in our country.

Who was it who said that, to listen to this debate, one would think that the poor people had too much money and the rich people did not have enough?

But let us get on to the children.

The Republican budget reveals the Medicaid program as we know it which provides health security to 36 million low-income Americans. Half of the beneficiaries are children. Consumers Union estimates that the Medicaid provisions in this bill will result in 12 million Americans losing health insurance coverage in the cutbacks that are proposed. The majority are uninsured children.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just, in closing, say that we all care about our children. We want the best for our children. But unless we understand that the well-being of our own children is directly connected to the well-being of poor children of America, our own children will not be well-served. That is the reconciliation we must provide for our country.

I urge our colleagues to vote "no" on the Republican glidepath to a crash.

PREVENT THE RAID ON AMERICAN PENSIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WELDON of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am only in my second term in Congress, but I remember last year one of the issues I heard a great deal was how many Members of Congress when we passed one of those massive bills has read the bill.

I would like to throw that down today as a challenge for the folks who happen to be watching tonight, Mr. Speaker, in that they would look at both H.R. 2491 and H.R. 2517, and to-

morrow we are getting ready to vote on this bill. I am sure the reason all our colleagues are not here is they are pouring over the pages of these bills tonight before they vote on them and I hope they would because if they had the chance to look at this, they would also see one section I am going to talk about tonight.

This morning, members of the Committee on Ways and Means and the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities that I am a member of and the Committee on the Budget held a press conference in a joint effort to alert American workers and retirees what effect the bill will have on their pension plans.

Several weeks ago, Republicans in the Committee on Ways and Means proposed changes in the Internal Revenue Code allowing employers to take assets from pension plans and use them for any purpose. This dangerous proposal would allow companies to take money from employee pension plans that they say are more than 125 percent funded. Those excess pension assets, the funds not needed to pay immediate pension benefits, can be used freely for purposes that may not certainly be in the interest of those retirees or potential retirees.

Allowing companies to strip so-called surplus pension assets from the employee pension plans would take us back to the early 1980's, when companies took away \$20 billion from over 2,000 pension plans, covering nearly 2.5 million workers and retirees.

Prior to the 1980's, the reversions of pension assets to employers were almost nonexistent. Pension assets were returned to employers only after the plan had been terminated and after all benefits to plan participants were paid. However, as pension assets grew because of the inflation in the late 1970's and the rising stock market of the 1980's, corporations began to take these excess pension funds.

In fact, in 1983, the Reagan administration issued guidelines making pension reversions easier, in other words, to get at that pension increase. From 1982 to 1990, over \$20 billion was taken from the over 2,000 retirement plans covering those 2.5 million workers and retirees. From 1982 to 1985, the size of the reversion grew rapidly: \$404 million reverted in 1982 alone to \$6.7 billion reverted in 1985.

As retirees were left without adequate retirement, Congress took strong action to stem the tide of the pension reversions or the raiding of the pension funds. Beginning in 1986, Congress imposed a series of excise taxes. A 10-percent excise tax on the amount of the reversion was in the Tax Reform Act of 1986, a 15-percent excise tax in the Technical and Miscellaneous Revenue Act of 1988, and in the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1990 a 20-percent tax was on employers who established a successor plan with similar benefits or they had to pay a 50-percent tax if no successor plan was established. So they

could not just come in and raid the taxes, the pension plans from 1986 to 1990.

So with these congressional measures, the number and size of the reversions substantially fell. So today we see increased pension plans, the assets of the pension plans that, by the way, Mr. Speaker, they are investing in our country. We hope they are investing in jobs and in our country. So it is for savings, but that money is not sitting somewhere and not earning money because we want those retirees to earn from the benefits of our country.

The effect of the reversion on the American worker in the Republican proposal would encourage employers to take billions of dollars out of these pension plans, leaving them possibly with insufficient funds to protect the future of current retirees. Money previously set aside for workers' retirement would now be pocketed by these same corporations and used for any purpose over that 125 percent.

The removal of these funds from pension plans increases the risk of loss to workers, retirees and their beneficiaries at a time when the need to make sure we have a strong pension system is great, when we worry about if social security is going to be there. And we all talk about that Social Security is not where people can survive on but it is just a beginning, and here we are going to hurt private pension plans by allowing employers to take money from them.

Pension plans are not the employers' money. Workers pay into those pension contribution funds and oftentimes accept lower wages, and I did that in the 1970's. We actually accepted, when I was in the printing business, a lower amount in our paycheck to make sure we paid into the pension plan. So today, Mr. Speaker, I am now a beneficiary of the printers pension that I do not know how much I will receive when I am 65.

But under the current pension and tax regulations, pension funds are in trust to be used only for the exclusive benefit of workers and retirees and should not be considered as piggy banks. This irresponsible provision encourages efforts to pilfer workers' pensions. This proposal is bad public policy.

A pension plan with excess assets today can quickly become underfunded if those assets are taken away. Because most pension plans are tied to the stock market, any downward turn will have a negative effect on the plan. In addition, a reduction in the interest rate of 1 percentage point, together with an asset reduction of 10 percent, reduces the funding level from 125 percent to 96 percent.

The American public must let the majority Republicans in Congress know that pension assets are held in trust for the exclusive benefit of plan participants and their beneficiaries. Taking money away from pension plans will reverse the progress made to

increase the national savings rate. Let us not permit companies to take pension assets from the American worker. Let us ensure that pensions will be safe and available for those who saved for their retirement.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would hope that our majority tomorrow would realize what it will do to the future of the pension plans and, hopefully, the U.S. Senate will change that or, as Secretary Reich said today, this is veto bait in this bill.

REPUBLICANS TURN BACKS ON FAMILY FARMER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. HILLIARD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HILLIARD. Mr. Speaker, I come before you tonight to discuss the shameful way the Republican Members of Congress are treating the American single family farmer with the farm and reconciliation bills.

The Republicans are treating our farmers like a bunch of ruined chickens, throwing them into the equivalent of the legislative compost heap, to slowly decompose, to rot, to wither, and then to simply waste away.

I am a member of the House of Committee on Agriculture, and I listen and read what the Republican Members have proposed. I know that the Republicans, as usual, have decided to choose sides with the big, rich corporations, rather than with American farm families.

America needs more than this. America expects more than this. Republicans always side with the big corporations. Republicans always promote the interests of the rich over the working people. Republicans have no remorse when it comes to bleeding and starving our farm families until they have absolutely nothing left, no profit, no home, and no hope for a future.

America is a great Nation today, not because we have a mighty military but because we can feed our military and our citizens, and, of course, the rest of the world.

The majority of the Republicans in this country are gung ho when it comes to funding the military. Look at the budgets that they propose. When it comes to investing in our farmers, they shun them, turn their backs on them, and in essence they are saying we Republicans do not need family farmers. After all, they are expendable, because we have big corporate farmers that can farm huge farms and make big profits.

Yes, America is great today because we can feed the world. And Americans can feed the world because in the past this Congress has had the wisdom to invest in our farm families.

Some people would have you believe that all the farmers have a bag of Federal subsidies and moneys that they do not need and to eliminate this country's debt, we must eliminate all of the farm programs. Well, the truth is that

the Republicans are still trying to pass the buck on to other people so that they can give their friends multibillion-dollar tax cuts, their rich friends.

What the Republicans will not tell Americans and what they will not tell our family farmers is that all of this money that they are saving will go to the rich, not to reducing the debt. I will tell you something else, that is a shame.

Most farmers are good, patriotic Americans. As most patriots will do, they have volunteered to eliminate many vital farm programs so that they can do their part in eliminating this Republican Reagan-Bush-caused deficit. Well, fair is fair and enough is enough.

The Republicans always talk a good talk when it comes to supporting families and family values. But when it comes to delivering on these promises, they always side with business and the wealthy. I hope all farmers have learned this lesson and remember it when election time comes rolling around again.

The Republicans have drafted a farm bill. As a matter of fact, they have drafted two. But neither one passed because the Republicans girdlocked on the committee. The Republicans simply cannot decide how much they want to take from the American farmers.

Ironically, the Republicans call their farm bill the Freedom to Farm Act. Unfortunately for our farmers under this Republican bill, no one will have the freedom to farm but large, big corporations.

□ 2030

The Republicans have turned their backs on the family farmers, and it is a shame, a dirty, rotten, Republican shame.

America is a world power because of our family farmer and what they have historically done for this country, and I for one am grateful to them for their sacrifices and all that they have done to make this country great.

I feel that we in Congress must protect them by voting against this reconciliation bill and the farm bill when it comes before this Congress.

GETTING OUR FINANCIAL HOUSE IN ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WELDON of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting in my office, and I have been hearing some of the most partisan, outrageous comments I have heard in the history of this place, and I guess that is saying a lot.

I have been in office 20 years now. I was 30 years in the statehouse in Hartford, CT, and now 7, almost 8 years now, in Congress, and I remember my time in the statehouse looking at